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SUBJECT: BRAZIL LAUNCHES A TEST ROCKET AS A STEP TOWARD REVIVING ITS LAUNCH PROGRAM FROM ALCANTARA LAUCNH CENTER

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On May 29, Brazil launched a research rocket from the Alcantara Launch Center (CLA) in the northeastern state of Maranhao. Brazilian officials are considering the launch a success for the Brazilian space program, and an important step toward putting a satellite into orbit. Brazil plans to launch three more rockets in 2009, with the hopes that in 2010 it will become the first Latin American country to put a satellite into space. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On May 29, 2009 Brazil launched a 19 ft. long Orion rocket from its Alcantara Launch Center (CLA) in the northeastern state of Maranhao under the mission name "Maracati 1." The Brazilian Space Agency reports that the rocket traveled 93km (57.8 miles) into the atmosphere before falling back into the ocean. Both the Brazilian Space Agency and the military are calling the launch a "total success." The rocket was equipped with tracking equipment to gather data during the flight for use in future launches.

¶3. (SBU) Brazil plans to launch three more rockets from CLA in 2009: one in July, one in September and one in November. One of these launches will send a Brazilian sounding rocket (VSB-30) 200km above earth's surface to gather further flight data. These launches will be completed in preparation for a July 2010 launch in which Brazil hopes to put a satellite into orbit aboard a Cyclone 4 rocket. If successful, the 2010 launch will mark the first time a Latin American country has accomplished this technical feat.

¶4. (SBU) The May 29 launch comes after a two year hiatus. The last launch at CLA was in July 2007 using a sounding rocket. Even though key components of the rocket were never recovered, Brazil considered the launch a success. Since its inception in 1994, the Brazilian Space Agency has attempted several times to launch a satellite into space, but has yet to succeed. Brazil tried to launch a satellite on two occasions, one in 1997 and another 1999, but both rockets exploded shortly after take-off. In 2003, Brazil attempted to send two satellites into space using one launch vehicle, but an explosion caused by a premature ignition of the rocket killed 21 people, and destroyed the launch pad.

¶5. (SBU) The facility at Alcantara is the world's closest launch facility to the equator. This unique feature allows engineers to reduce fuel consumption by using the earth's centripetal force to aid in the rocket's ascent. Although the Brazilian Space Agency uses the Alcantara facilities for launch research, the site is operated by the Brazilian Air Force.

¶6. (SBU) These launches are made possible through the extensive assistance provided by the Ukrainians via the Ukrainian-Brazilian joint venture Alcantara Cyclone Space, which was created in 2002. The Ukrainians had the responsibility for reconstructing the damaged launch facility, including the launch pad, while the Brazilians provided and improved the transportation infrastructure to the

launch site.

SOBEL